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Ex-CIA clerk to testify against Ghana lover

By Pam McClintock
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A former CIA clerk who has admitted to passing classified information to a Ghanaian national will testify against her former lover when he goes to trial in two weeks on charges of espionage.

On Friday, federal prosecutors agreed to drop charges of espionage brought against Sharon Marie Scranage after she pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of giving Michael Agbotui Soussoudis classified information in March 1984 concerning military equipment Ghana had requested from Libya.

Miss Scranage, of King George, Va., had been accused of conspiring to commit espionage in 1982 and 1983 while working at the CIA station in Accra, Ghana, by allegedly providing Mr. Soussoudis with names of CIA informants and information regarding activities of Ghanaian dissidents.

Under terms of the plea agreement presented during a hear-

ing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Miss Scranage, 29, will be required to cooperate with the government in its case against Mr. Soussoudis, who became her lover after she was assigned to the West African nation in May 1983.

Mr. Soussoudis, 39, who is being held without bond, was an intelligence agent for the Ghanaian government, prosecutors said. His trial is set for Oct. 15 in U.S. District Court in Alexandria.

Miss Scranage wiped tears from her eyes as U.S. District Judge Richard L. Williams accepted her guilty plea on one count of knowingly transmitting classified information. The remaining 15 counts lodged against her, including four counts of violating espionage laws, were dismissed.

Last month, Miss Scranage pleaded guilty to two counts of violating laws that protect identities of intelligence agents by revealing to Mr. Soussoudis the names of two Ghanaian dissidents working for the CIA.

Miss Scranage, who is free on bond, faces a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison and a \$110,000 fine. She is scheduled to be sentenced Oct. 25.

Miss Scranage, who had been scheduled to stand trial Oct. 4, could have faced four life terms in prison if convicted of espionage.

Initially, sources within the Justice Department said the government was unwilling to enter into a plea agreement with Miss Scranage, who returned to this country in May, and that it intended to prosecute her on all charges.

A spokesman for the Justice Department declined to comment yesterday on the plea agreement, but said the department had approved it. Assistant U.S. Attorney Justin Williams, who handled the case, also declined to comment.

Brian Gettings, attorney for Miss Scranage, said he entered into negotiations with prosecutors this week and that he was satisfied with the plea bargain.

"I always believed they would come to their senses," Mr. Gettings said. "The one thing we would never admit to was espionage."

Mr. Gettings said the government "overloaded" its case against his client. He has said Miss Scranage is "by no stretch of the imagination a spy" and that she cooperated with law enforcement officials and helped to get Mr. Soussoudis to the United States before the two were arrested in June.

Mr. Soussoudis is a relative of Ghana's leader, Jerry Rawlings, and works for that country's intelligence service, prosecutors said.

Miss Scranage, who had top security clearance, typed intelligence reports and cables and handled station accounting while in Ghana.

In March 1985, she copied from intelligence cables information concerning military equipment Ghana had requested from Libya, according to the plea agreement. She then gave the information to Mr. Soussoudis, whom she had reason to believe was an agent of the Ghanaian government, prosecutors said.